



State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

Date: September 20, 2011

To: Senate Committee on Transportation and Elections

Fr: Senator Sheila Harsdorf

Re: Senate Bill 181 – Transporting oversize loads of hay or straw

Chair Lazich and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 181, which seeks to allow oversize permits for loads of hay or straw. While I am unable to attend the public hearing to personally testify, I would like to share written testimony to highlight the importance of enacting this change.

Under current law, oversize loads that exceed state height limitations are eligible for a permit from the Department of Transportation if the load is not divisible. However, since hay and straw loads may be divided, operators transporting these commodities are not allowed to obtain permits to transport loads that extend above the 13'6" height limit in state law.

This issue was brought to my attention by a constituent who pointed out the financial costs and waste that occurs due to our current law. Since some neighboring states and a number of western states and Canadian provinces allow hay and straw to be transported with oversize loads, the inability to obtain an oversize permit in Wisconsin presents a challenge in delivering hay and straw through our to our state. Operators are often required to abandon part of their load upon entering Wisconsin, even though a load of hay or straw from another state might only exceed Wisconsin's height limit by a couple inches. This results in either a loss by having to throw off the top tier of the load or possibly selling it at a reduced price.

Under the substitute amendment to SB 181, an oversize load of hay and straw would be eligible for a DOT permit if it does not exceed 14'6" on a highway in an urban area or 15' on all other highways. Route approval would be required.

I urge committee members to support this legislation as a means to ease the transport of hay and straw and avoid unnecessary losses for operators and agricultural producers and appreciate timely action in order to move this bill forward. Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions or concerns, I would welcome hearing from you.